

John Karns House
900 North Canal Street
Pittsburgh
Allegheny County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-424

HABS
PA
2-PITBU
16-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. PA-424

JOHN KARNS HOUSE

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16-

Address: 900 North Canal Street, Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

Present Owner: The H. J. Heinz Company

Present Occupants: Various tenants

Present Use: Two-family dwelling

Brief Statement of Significance: One of the few extant examples of a Greek Revival Pittsburgh town house. With the exception of interior alterations, the general plan of the building has not changed.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Original and Subsequent Owners:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Deed Book</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
10/25/1854	113	542	Frances Karns	John Karns
(Record refers to the transfer of only the lot)				
8/18/1862	157	102	John Karns	James Baldwin, M.D.
(Record refers to the transfer of the house and lot - first mention of the house)				
8/25/1864	176	159	James Baldwin, M.D.	John Duncan, M.D.
9/5/1866	208	36	John Duncan, M.D. and wife	James P. Alcorn, M.D.
1/29/1879	384	438	Samuel Hazlett exr. of LW&T of James P. Alcorn	Thomas Mabon, M.D.
11/28/1891	764	363	Heirs of Thomas Mabon, M.D.	Mrs. Anna Mary Boehm
5/15/1897	985	530	Mrs. Anna Mary Boehm	Joseph Martin
9/28/1912	1757	287	Joseph Martin	James W. Kinnear
11/23/1912	2720	34	James W. Kinnear	H. J. Heinz Co.
(Deed not recorded until 1941)				

B. Date of Erection: About 1855

C. Sources of Information: Chain of title compiled from deed records of the H. J. Heinz Company and from the Deed Books in the Allegheny County office building.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: One of the few extant examples of a Greek Revival Pittsburgh town house.
2. Condition of fabric: Poor.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions: 23'-6" x 56'-0", two stories on an elevated basement; rectangular - main block with rear wing.
2. Foundations: Scored cement plaster over rubble masonry.
3. Wall construction: Scored cement plaster from grade to sandstone band at first-floor level, red brick above.
4. Structural system: Brick bearing wall with wood joists spanning east and west.
5. Porches: Raised covered porch on the south (front) elevation. Three modified Doric columns with plain capitals and bases. Plain entablature with denticulated architrave and projecting cornice (simple cymation with bead molding beneath) supported by twin carved brackets over the columns and two smaller brackets between the columns.
6. Chimneys: West gable end, twin brick chimneys with connecting roof curtain.
Backbuilding, one brick chimney with three low terracotta stacks.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Plain Greek Revival doorway in the south (front) elevation. Door framed with simple pilasters and flanked by three-light side lights, denticulated architrave above, the whole framed by half-size pilasters and surmounted by six-light fixed sash. Modern doorway cut in basement under front porch. Two doorways in west elevation of basement (six-paneled doors with transom above) with access from street level by two separate exterior stairways.
 - b. Windows: Plain flat wood lintels and sills, plain Greek Revival architraves, six-over-six light single-hung wood sash. One window in the pedimented gable end - plain six-over-six wood sash with flanking four-light side lights.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape: Gable roof over front section with ridge running east and west. Gable roof over rear section with ridge running north and south.
- b. Cornice: Plain fascia board with large bead molding and slightly projecting cornice (simple cymation and cavetto) supported by wood brackets - the whole continuous around the gable end. The same bead motif forms the raking cornice which frames the pediment on the west gable end.

- C. Technical Description of Interior: The building was not accessible at the time of this inspection. Descriptions of these floor plans are based on HABS drawings:

Basement, first and second floors have simple axial plan with hallway on the east party wall and extending from front to back of the main block. Greek Revival double parlor is separated from rear room by a hallway. Third floor of the main block was inaccessible at the time the drawings were made.

D. Site

1. Orientation: Situated on the northwest corner of Chestnut and Canal Streets facing the elevated railroad tracks (originally faced canal).
2. Walks: Elevated front yards with brick walkways and terrace.

Prepared by John D. Milner, Architect
National Park Service
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